Reviewer’s report

Title: Follow-up care by patient’s own general practitioner after contact with out-of-hours care. A descriptive study.

Version: 1 Date: 1 February 2005

Reviewer: Cathy Shipman

Reviewer’s report:

General

Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

I found this an interesting paper with a useful contribution to make to an understanding about the impact of contacting a co-op out of hours. There are some issues I have raised below which it would be useful to consider further.

I would have expected the reporting of statistically significant results to have been based around 0.05. I usually include variables that are significant up to 0.10 at the univariate level but then eliminate - or interpret with caution above 0.05/0.06.at the multivariate level. I would have said that in the overall model the patients’ health insurance was not significant - possibly just indicating the possibility of an association, and in the telephone advice model, the severity of the condition was not statistically significant. I know the cut off point of 0.05 is arbitrary - but if results are to be reported beyond this - then it requires explanation.

I am however, not a statistician, and so it would be useful for an expert to make final comments here.

There is a problem with the response rate - but I know that these are difficulties we all face. Can the authors say how many reminders they used - and can they say anything about the characteristics of non-responders - eg can they get age/sex breakdown from the co-ops.

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

Was 2805 the number of all contacts with the 7 co-ops - this should be stated, and if not what the overall figure was and why it was not used.

I would like to see a table of all variables entered into the logistic regression and results. I am suprised that age was not significant - as it appeared to be important in home visits for the elderly.

I would like to see a table with all the questions and overall percentage responses.

It would be useful to have a table giving overall figures for home visits, telephone advice etc as background.

The article needs a little tightening up grammatically - eg in the Abstract under Background - ‘..after
patients have contacted a GP co-op' and 'the dimensions of follow-up care...' under results '...Only 20% were referred...' Under Conclusion '...The most important factor...'

In the introduction, second paragraph, '...being a new type of organisation in Dutch health care, aim to enhance....' The second sentence needs rethinking - is 'a further improvement of the efficiency...' meaning 'improved efficiency of the organisation..'

Under Statistics - I find the last sentence confusing.

Under results - the sentence starting 'In total, 48.2% (166+236/834) needs to be more clearly presented in terms of where the figures come from - you can work it out with the table - but try to make it clearer at this point. Continuing on in this sentence 'of these patients reported they had attended their own GP...'

It would be interesting to develop the discussion a little more - on page 12 I was unsure what the second from last sentence meant about inefficient care - spell out the link to the co-op here.

I found the flow chart of respondents useful - not seen one presented like this before. It would improve clarity to highlight referral to the medical specialist is Hospital or A&E.

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

It would be interesting to look at the results for each co-op - although I realise that numbers may be small. Might there be socioeconomic/geographical differences that might influence the results - or differences in the organisation/staffing levels of the co-op. They could be entered in the logistic regression.

What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

Statistical review: Yes

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare I have no competing interests.